

Literature Circles in The Elementary Classroom:

A literature unit focusing on integrating literature circles into the curriculum

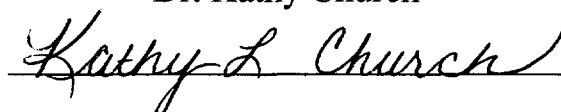
An Honors Thesis (Honors 499)

by

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Thesis Advisor

Dr. Kathy Church

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathy L. Church". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the printed name "Dr. Kathy Church".

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Abstract

This thesis is divided into four sections. The first piece is an examination into literature circles, their purpose and their structure. A literature circle is a small group of students who gather together to discuss a piece of literature. Research indicates that literature circles allow students to gain a deeper meaning and increased understanding from what they are reading. After this examination into literature circles, a brief synopsis and explanation is given for the format used in this literature unit. The third piece of this thesis contains a literature unit that incorporates literature circles and integrative activities around the award-winning novel *Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse. The fourth piece contains a reflection on how this unit incorporates the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium principles of model standards for beginning teacher licensing and development.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks are due to Dr. Kathy Church who patiently listened to all of my thoughts and ideas concerning this thesis project. She helped me define my purpose and goal in creating this unit, and was an encourager when I felt off track and overwhelmed. Thank you.

My thanks also goes to the students at Immanuel Academy who took the time to read *Out of the Dust*, participate in literature discussions, and complete sample activities for this unit.

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Literature Unit Schedule

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Winter 1934 Pre-reading Social Studies activity	Winter 1934 *Vocabulary and Spelling activity	Winter 1934 Literature Circle Groups are formed and meet Read pages: 6-16 for next discussion	Winter 1934 *Social Studies activity	Winter 1934 Literature Circle Groups <i>Read pages: 17-33 for next discussion</i>
Winter 1934 Literature Circle Groups <i>Read pages: 37-51 for next discussion</i>	Winter 1934 *Vocabulary and Spelling activity *Science Activity Day 1	Spring 1934 Literature Circle Groups <i>Read pages: 55-84 for next discussion</i>	Spring 1934 Share SKETCH-TO- STRETCH drawings *Science Activity Day 2	Summer 1934 Literature Circle Groups <i>Read pages: 87-95 for next discussion</i>
Autumn 1934 Literature Circle Groups Read pages: 99- 124 for next discussion	Autumn 1934 *Vocabulary and Spelling activity *Social Studies activity	Winter 1935 Literature Circle Groups Read pages: 125- 149 for next discussion	Winter 1935 *Social Studies activity	Winter 1935 Literature Circle Groups Read pages: 153- 189 for next discussion

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<p>Spring 1935</p> <p>Literature Circle Groups</p> <p>Read Pages: 193-206 for next discussion</p>	<p>Spring 1935</p> <p>*Vocabulary and Spelling activity</p> <p>*Social Studies activity</p>	<p>Summer 1935</p> <p>Literature Circle Groups</p> <p>Read Pages: 207-220 for next discussion</p>	<p>Summer 1935</p> <p>Social Studies activity</p>	<p>Autumn 1935</p> <p>Literature Circle Groups</p>
<p>Work on extension projects</p>	<p>Work on extension projects</p> <p>*Social Studies Activity</p>	<p>Work on extension projects</p>	<p>Share projects and Social Studies Timelines</p>	<p>Share projects and Social Studies Timelines</p>

Literature Circle Discussions in The Elementary Classroom

Research Base

The elementary classroom is the best place to get students hooked on reading and inquiry based learning. A literature circle discussion is a tool that ignites the flames for active reading, learning, listening, and questioning. Literature circles are small groups of students who gather to discuss a piece of literature together. The discussion is guided by students' responses to what they have read. Literature circles provide a way for students to engage in critical thinking and reflection as they read, discuss, and respond to books.

Jody Thomas, a Fourth grade teacher at Cowan Elementary who has used literature circles in her classroom for over two years, stated the following: "Literature circles allow the students to communicate and express their ideas with others and then get feedback. They encourage the students to delve into deeper thinking processes and to come up with more creative thoughts. They also teach students the value of listening and learning from one another."

Although discussions in the classroom is not a new concept or strategy, the concept of literature circles is relatively new. In 1986, Kathy Short wrote about kid-led groups that show the genuine features of cooperative learning and student centeredness in her dissertation titled, *Literacy as a collaborative experience* (Daniels, 1994, p30). In 1990, Short's and Pierces' work with teachers in finding new ways to teach literature and language at Mckelvey Elementary School in Missouri, confirmed their beliefs that using literature discussion groups was a move in the right direction. They found that the students were enthusiastic about reading real books and discussing them, without the artificial accountability of predetermined comprehension questions and worksheets" (186). In 1989, Eeds and Wells also found that when students enter into "grand conversations" a deeper meaning and enriched understanding becomes possible for all students. Grand conversations occur when students are allowed to interpret the text and construct and share their own meanings (5).

Literature circles have been proven to enhance learning for the student immensely. But how does a teacher get the students to discuss and delve deeply into the literature? How does she decide who leads the discussions or what the discussions should be about?

These are very common questions that teachers have when beginning literature circles. The following questions and answers relay some of my findings.

What is the role of the teacher in literature response groups? Who should lead these groups?

Short, K., Kaufman, G., Kaser, S., Kahn, L.H. & Crawford, K.M. (1999) identified four teacher roles, which are facilitator, participant, mediator, and active listener. Each of these roles has some benefit, however, many times the students talk less with an adult in the group. However, Short and her colleagues saw great potential for teachers to use their own connections as readers to push student thinking (380). They also noted that while wanting students to open up and share their personal opinions, they were not doing this themselves. They were afraid that they might have unintentionally sent a message to the students about their own willingness to be vulnerable (380).

As you can see, there is benefit in having a teacher or adult be a part of a literature group. However, a teacher should have a goal of getting the groups to eventually be student led. For this to happen, there must be much modeling from the teacher, otherwise the students will discuss the literature in a round robin fashion.

What kinds of questions or discussion topic ideas do you use for the discussion groups?

In order to keep students from answering questions in a round robin fashion, Evans (2001) states that the teacher must provide scaffolding. Scaffolding can take place through discussion topic ideas and modeling of how to discuss these topics, literature response journals, and the use of genuine, thought provoking questions, also known as fat versus thin questions (38-39).

Teachers should teach and model the use of fat questions instead of thin questions. Daniels (1994) writes that skinny questions can be answered in a word or two, leaving nothing more to say. Fat questions are the questions you can say a lot about. There aren't necessarily right answers to these questions. Everyone can have different things to say about fat questions (54-55).

Evans (2001) recorded a sampling of some of her students thought provoking questions over *The Great Gilly Hopkins* after teaching a lesson on what a genuine, thought provoking (fat) question is (56).

- What made Gilly change her attitude?
- Why is Gilly acting so nice and cleaning the house?
- I wonder if Gilly will find a way to stay with her mom?
- I wonder if Gilly will start to like her grandma's house?

What kind of topics should the students discuss?

Evans (2001) has put together a list of discussion topics in her book *Literature Discussion Groups in the Intermediate Grades*. Included are the following:

- o Relate the book to your own experiences.
- o Share how a character is like/not like you.
- o Question the author.
- o Relate or compare the book to another book you have read.
- o Describe what you would do if you were in the story.

Should I use the same book for the students or allow choice?

Literature circles can take on a variety of formats. Students can have a choice between groups of books or the teacher can choose books. Jody Thomas found that choosing one book for every student to read helped unify the students and also provided less confusion for her as the teacher. However, she did state that as the year moved on and students became more familiar with literature circles, she did allow her students to choose their books. Harvey Daniels in his book, *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student-Centered Classroom*, stated that allowing students to have choice puts them in charge and motivates them to read.

Guide to this Literature Unit

This literature unit should act as a guide for teachers who have not incorporated literature circles and integrative activities into their curriculum. I chose to have the whole class read one central book. However, after the students complete this unit and are familiar with what consists of a good question, how to get discussions started, and how to keep them going, it would be much easier for a teacher to allow students to choose what they read.

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday are devoted to literature discussions. Tuesday and Thursday are devoted to a variety of integrative activities for Science, Social Studies, Vocabulary, and Spelling. These activities help access and build background knowledge for the reading of *Out of the Dust*. With this knowledge, the students are able to utilize and apply the new information to maintain high levels of comprehension.

This unit utilizes discussion topic and question sheets. These sheets are to guide students in their discussions and to act as a model for what a good question is. It is vital to go over the questions with the students before they are in their groups, in order, to prevent students from answering questions in a round robin fashion. However, not every literature discussion contains a discussion topic/question sheet. The open discussions that contain no discussion topic/question sheet, will allow the teacher to assess how well the students are using good discussion questions and topics in their discussions, and how well they are able to maintain these conversations for an extended period of time.



Out of The Dust

A literature unit focusing on integrating literature circles into curriculum
Grades 5-8

Compiled and created by: Maria Walker

Getting Started with Literature Circle Discussions

Literature discussion rules

In order for literature circle discussions to run smoothly, a few rules must be set in stone. It may be helpful to have the students create their own rules or to use the following rules:

- ✓ You must have all of the reading done and your journal filled out on the day your discussion group meets.
- ✓ Everyone must participate
- ✓ Listen when someone is speaking
- ✓ Be kind and considerate when sharing your opinion or when disagreeing with someone else's opinion

Discussion director

After arranging the students in groups, make sure you assign a starter or discussion director for each group. This person's job will be to read the discussion questions, ask for students' responses, and to keep the group on task. You may choose to have a different discussion director everyday or to keep the same one for an extended time period.

Reasons to talk about books

Share the following list about why we talk about books with the students. Have them list other ideas that they can come up with. Post this in the classroom and refer to it after discussions.

Reasons to Talk About Books

- Voice our ideas
- Learn about other people's ideas
- To sort out our ideas and toss them around and see how they turn out
- To understand ourselves and each other together
- To understand the world better

Winter 1934

Pre reading: Social Studies Activity

Materials: *Children of the Dust Bowl* by Jerry Stanley

Procedures:

- Read the first three chapters of *Children of the Dust Bowl* aloud to the class.
 - Have the students think about the main ideas and details presented in these chapters.
 - Using an overhead or chalkboard, write down the main points the students come up with.
 - Next, reread page 14 that contains the lyrics to a song about the people of Oklahoma.
 - Have the students discuss how the lyrics are like a poem.
 - Have students write their own poems including some of the main ideas and details that they learned from these chapters.
 - Share with the class.
-

Vocabulary and Spelling activities

For the Novel

***Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse**

- Put students into their literature groups. Give each group a card with one of the following words on it. Have them look through their books pages 3-16 to find the word. Students will read the sentences that contain their word and then decide upon its meaning. Students will consult the dictionary for the correct definition and if not in the dictionary, make their own definition and ask the teacher for clarification.
- After this, the group will create a drawing to illustrate the meaning of their word and will then present it to the class. The drawing should also have the word and definition written on the bottom.

1. fierce: intensely eager; intense;
2. (song) plugger: to publicize or boost a song by frequent performance. To put an end to
3. pledged: to bind by a promise or agreement
4. pestering: to annoy constantly, to bother
5. riled: angered or irritated
6. whittled: to reduce; destroy, or get rid of gradually. To cut or pare thin shavings from wood

*All definitions in unit from Random House Webster's College Dictionary. (1991). New York, NY: Random House.

fierce	song plugger	riled
pledged	pestering	whittled

Winter 1934

Pages: 3-5

Before the students begin reading *Out of the Dust*, it is important to do some pre-reading activities to access their prior knowledge and give them a purpose for reading.

Before reading:

- Have students make predictions about this story based on the picture on the cover or the information they read from the jacket cover.
- Ask students if they have ever been in a dust storm or driven on a dirt road in the summer heat. Have them write in their journals and then discuss their responses with the class.
- Before reading, give students their journals. Explain what they will be doing with these. *See Reading Response Journals
- Have students fill out the first page.
- Explain each section of the journal to the students.

During reading:

- Read pages 3-5 aloud.
- Give students a few minutes to reread the passage silently at least two times.

After reading:

- Ask the students to make a list of questions that came to their minds through reading this.
-

- Ask students to share a few of their written questions and then compile a list of the questions and break the students into groups of three to four to discuss.
- * Use the group list on the following page to make groups for your students.
- Make sure you assign each group a special place where they will meet each time.

Teacher Tasks:

Walk around to make sure students are on task.

Sit on the outskirts of a discussion and let students discuss without teacher help.

Student Tasks:

Students will read pages 6-16 for the next discussion.

Students will respond in their journals to the following prompt: I wonder...

*Reading Response Journals

These journals are to be written in throughout the reading of the story.

- Reproduce and cut in half the first page.
 - The second page should be copied for however many times the students will be meeting.
- **Golden Phrases** are sentences that the students find intriguing or have a question about. These phrases should be shared in discussion groups.
- **Prompted Responses** are what the teacher assigns the students to write about.
- The **Personal Response** section is where the students can put their questions, their own thoughts, or words they thought were interesting etc.
- The backsides of the pages can be used to draw sketches of what the story evokes in a students mind or for extra writing room.

* Look at the example of the journal layout.

Response Journal

Name _____

Title of Book _____

Author's name _____

Group member's names _____

Pages read for discussion: _____ Date: _____

Golden Phrases:

Prompted Response:

Personal Response:

Are you ready to discuss?

Finished assigned reading ____
Completed journal assignment ____
Marked parts you want to share ____
Ready to participate ____

Pages read for discussion: _____ Date: _____

Golden Phrases:

Prompted Response:

Personal Response:

Are you ready to discuss?

Finished assigned reading ____
Completed journal assignment ____
Marked parts you want to share ____
Ready to participate ____

List of Students in Literature Circle Groups:

1	2	3	4	5	6

Winter 1934

Pages 6-16

- Have students read over their written prompts.
 - Give students a couple minutes to reread this section before discussing.
 - Hand out the list of discussion questions to each student.
 - Go over the questions and then allow students to get into their groups to discuss. Give students approximately fifteen to twenty minutes.
- *Questions are on the following page.

Teacher Tasks:

Walk around to each group making sure students are on task.

Hand out self-evaluation sheets to students after the discussions.

Explain to the students that this checklist should help them see what they need to work on during group discussions.

Student Tasks:

Read pages 17-33

Prompted Response: Write about how you set the table for dinner.

Discussion Questions/Topics for pages 6-16

1. Tell about an argument you have gotten in where you end up refusing to talk to one another.
 2. What kind of friend do you think Billie Jo is? Do you think she should feel bad for wanting to take her friends place?
 3. Does Billy Jo remind you of yourself in anyway?
 4. Pick someone in your group to read out loud pages 13-14. Think of a word that describes Billie Jo's feelings about playing piano. Share with your group.
 5. Share your journal responses with the group.
-

Student self-evaluation checklist

Name			
Student self-evaluation Checklist: place a check in the appropriate box	Always	Sometimes	Never
Did I give a response or comment to each question?			
Did I listen to each member's response?			
Did I share my personal connections or my journal responses?			

Name			
Student self-evaluation Checklist: place a check in the appropriate box	Always	Sometimes	Never
Did I give a response or comment to each question?			
Did I listen to each member's response?			
Did I share my personal connections or my journal responses?			

Name			
Student self-evaluation Checklist: place a check in the appropriate box	Always	Sometimes	Never
Did I give a response or comment to each question?			
Did I listen to each member's response?			
Did I share my personal connections or my journal responses?			

Social Studies Activity

Materials: Computer lab

Have the students, in pairs, research information on Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Have students think of a creative way to share what they learned. This could be a newspaper article, a drawing, or a short written report.

- ✓ Make sure students include facts about one or two of the following areas: his presidency, his illness, his birthplace and birth date, or the memorial built for him.
- ✓ Students will share their projects with the class.

*Students will need at least two to three class periods to complete.

Websites:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/local/longterm/tours/fdr/>

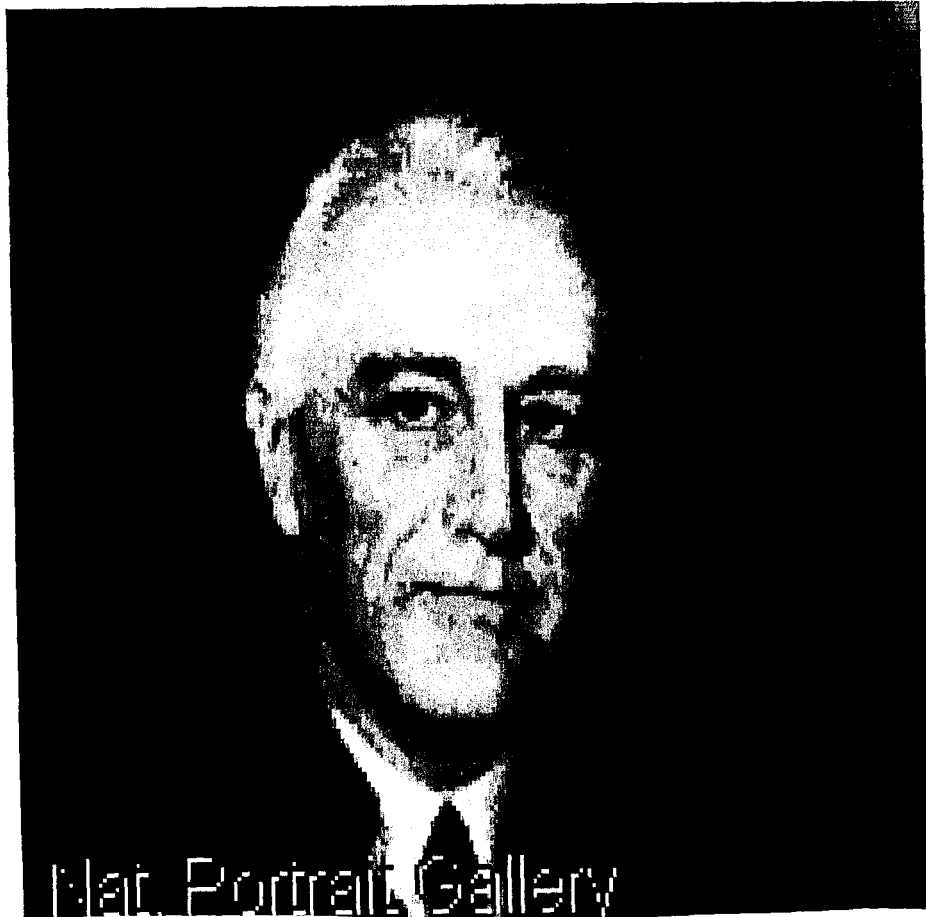
<http://members.aol.com/FDRmem/>

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents/fr32.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/dustbowl/peopleevents/index.html>

Two students created this short report on Franklin Roosevelt. Although there is a considerable amount of grammatical errors, the report contains a good amount of information.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt



Franklin Delano Roosevelt was born in 1882 in Hyde Park New York, and was an only child. He went to Harvard to Study law. He got married to his distant cousin and they had 6 Kids. He became the 32nd president of the United States, and he served longer then anyone else ever had. He Became ill with Poliomyelitis. He had overexerted himself by swimming and hiking and was unable to walk, so he had to use a Weal chair. He died on April 12 1945. His house serves as a memorial towards him.

Winter 1934

Pages: 17-33

- Before allowing the students to get into their literature circle groups, have them brainstorm a list of questions they had while responding in their journals.
- Write the questions on chart paper.
- Give the students fifteen to twenty minutes to discuss their responses, golden phrases, and the questions posted on the board.
- After the discussion, have each group volunteer a response to one of the questions on the chart paper. List a few of the responses on the paper.

Optional Reading Activity:

- While the students are in their groups, have them choose a passage from this section to read to the whole class.
- Each student in the group will read his/her part assigned by the group.

Teacher tasks:

Take anecdotal notes of student participation. *Look at form.
Share your own connections to the story with at least two groups.

Student tasks:

Read pages 37-51 for next meeting.
Prompted Response: I feel.....

Spelling and Vocabulary Activity

Pages: 17-33

1. secondhand- previously used, not new
2. spindly- slender, elongated, and often weak
3. dazzled- 1. to dim the vision of, especially to blind with intense light.
2.to amaze or bewilder with spectacular display.
4. ratcheted- ratchet (to increase or decrease with increments)
5. feud- a bitter, long-continued, and deadly quarrel esp. between clans or families
6. oilcloth- cloth made waterproof with oil or, now especially, with heavy coats of paint: used to cover tables or shelves.

- Write the above words on the board. Have students use index cards to write the word on one card and the definition on another card.
 - Give the students a few minutes to go over the definitions, and then allow students to pair up to play vocabulary memory.
-

Science Activity

Day 1: Materials: sand, newspaper, paper cups, and water

- Place students' desks into groups of four. Place newspapers under the desks and on top of the desks.
- Sprinkle sand on top of each desk.
- Tell the students that they cannot brush the sand off of their desks.
- After an hour, give the students a cup with a small amount of water inside it. Make sure their desks are cleared of everything but a pencil and a piece of paper. Have them sprinkle a small amount of water onto the sand and newspaper to attempt to clean up the sand.
- Then have the students try to write a letter to their parents about how it feels to have sand everywhere.
- After cleaning up the sand mess, read aloud pages 21-22 and 31-33.
- Have a whole class discussion of how dust affected the lives of the people in the dust bowl.

Day 2:

Materials: computers, paper, pencils

- Have the students write for a few minutes about why or how they think the dust bowl began.
 - Discuss the students' writings.
 - Tell the students they are going to find out about the bad agricultural practices that eventually caused the dust bowl.
 - Have the students connect to www.pbs.org/amex/dustbowl. Have the students write down two facts about how the dust bowl began.
 - Share findings with class.
-

Anecdotal Notes:

Write the student's name in each box.

Use small post-it notes to record observations and stick in appropriate box.

Spring 1934

Spring 1934

Pages: 37-51

- Hand out the discussion questions to the students and read each question aloud. Model for the students by giving your own response to the first question.
- Allow fifteen to twenty minutes for discussion.
- **SKETCH-TO-STRETCH**
 - After discussion, have the students draw a picture that depicts what the story means to them so far. *See student examples.
- Have the students share in small groups or as a whole class the following day.

Teacher tasks:

Take anecdotal notes of student participation.

Optional: Use the sketch-to-stretch drawing as an assessment piece.

Tell students to use post-it notes to mark parts of the story that they want to share for the next discussion.

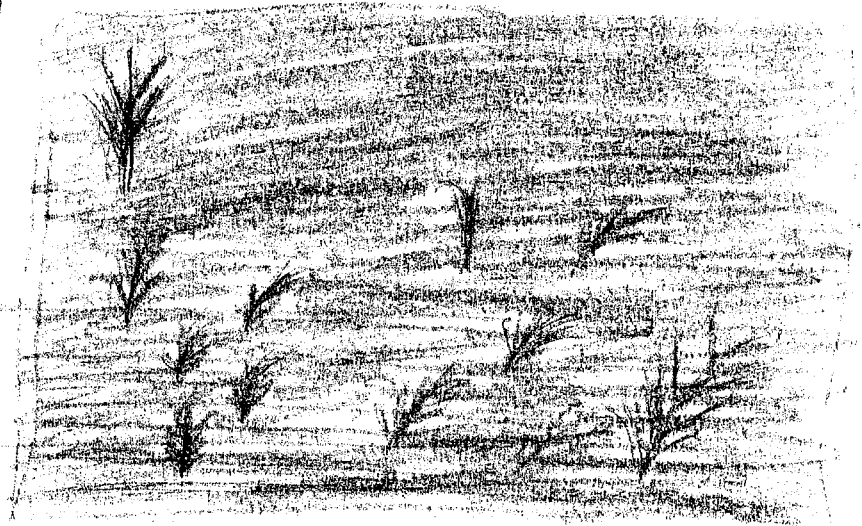
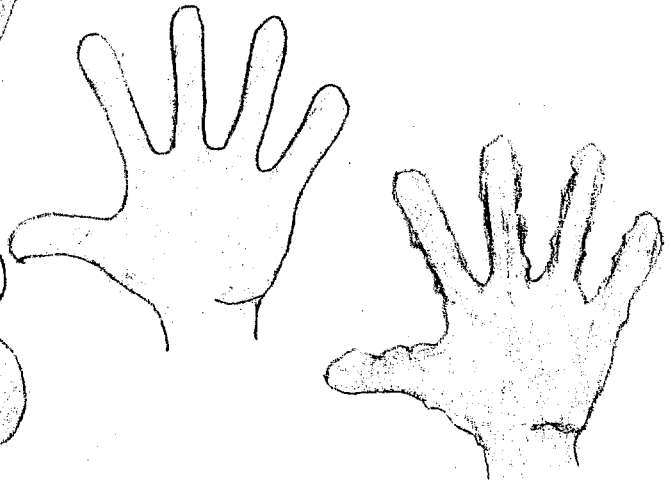
Student tasks:

Read pages 55-84 for next discussion.

Prompted Response: I predict.....

Use post-it notes to mark parts of the story that you want to share.

Things that happened in the book
"Out of the Dust"



Discussion Questions/Topics for pages 37-51

1. Why do you think the author writes so much about playing the piano?
 2. Share what you would do with the farm if you were Billie Jo's father?
 3. Why do you think Billie Jo's mom thinks that building a pond would be a good idea?
 4. Share your journal responses and any section of the text that you had questions about.
-

Summer 1934

Summer 1934

Pages: 55-84

- Hand out discussion questions.
- Allow twenty minutes for discussion.
- After discussion, have the students fill out the *self-reflection sheet for evaluation purposes.
- Also, hand out the ***Venn diagrams** explaining to students that they are going to compare and contrast Billie Jo and her dad. This should also include how each one reacts to the deaths in the family. Have a few students give examples and write these on the board.

Teacher tasks:

Walk around the room and join in with at least two groups.

Take anecdotal notes of student participation.

Hand out self-reflection sheets and Venn diagrams after discussion.

Student tasks:

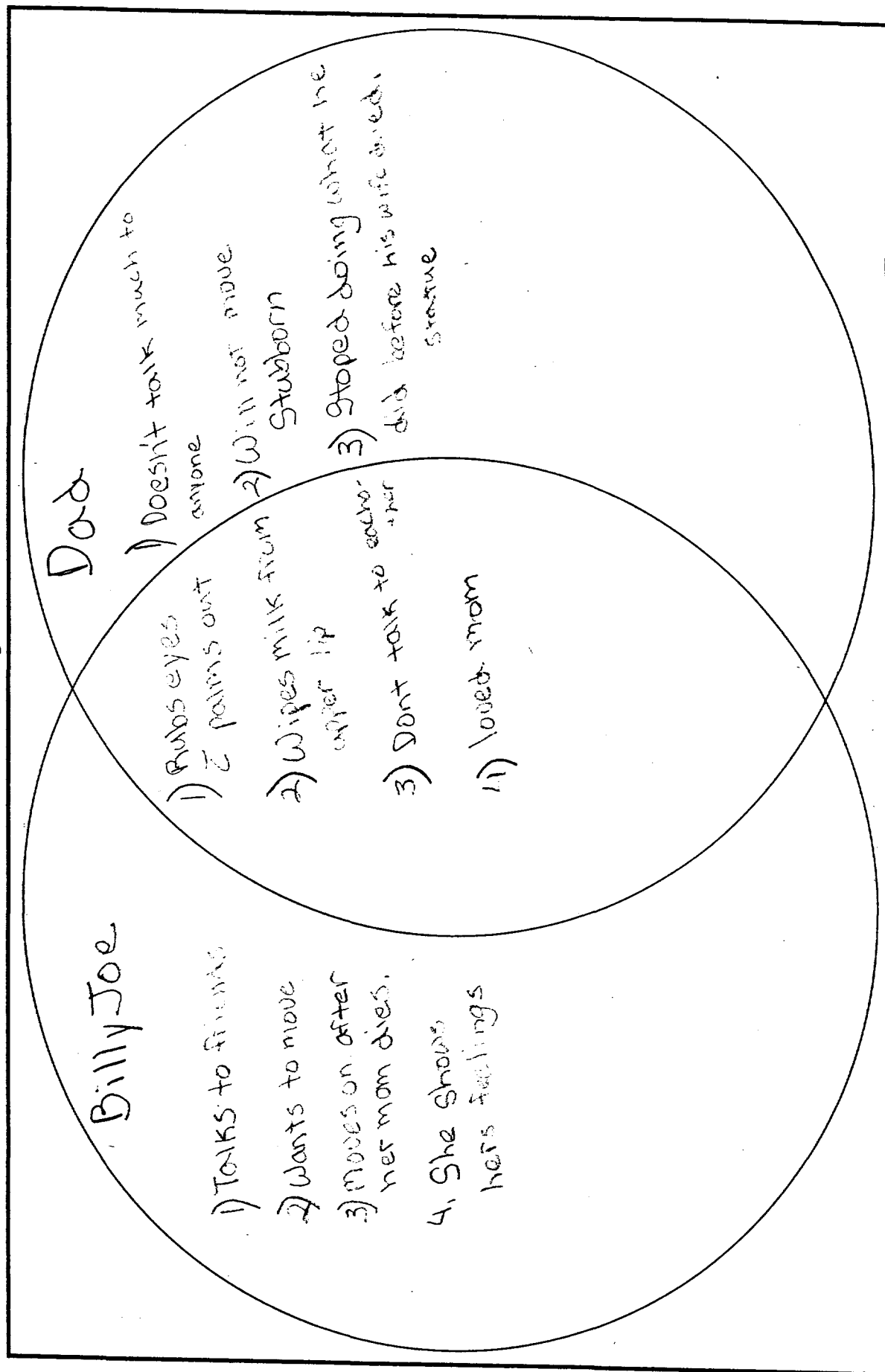
Read pages 87-95

Prompted Response: Complete the Venn diagram comparing and contrasting Billie Jo and her dad and how they react to the deaths in their family.

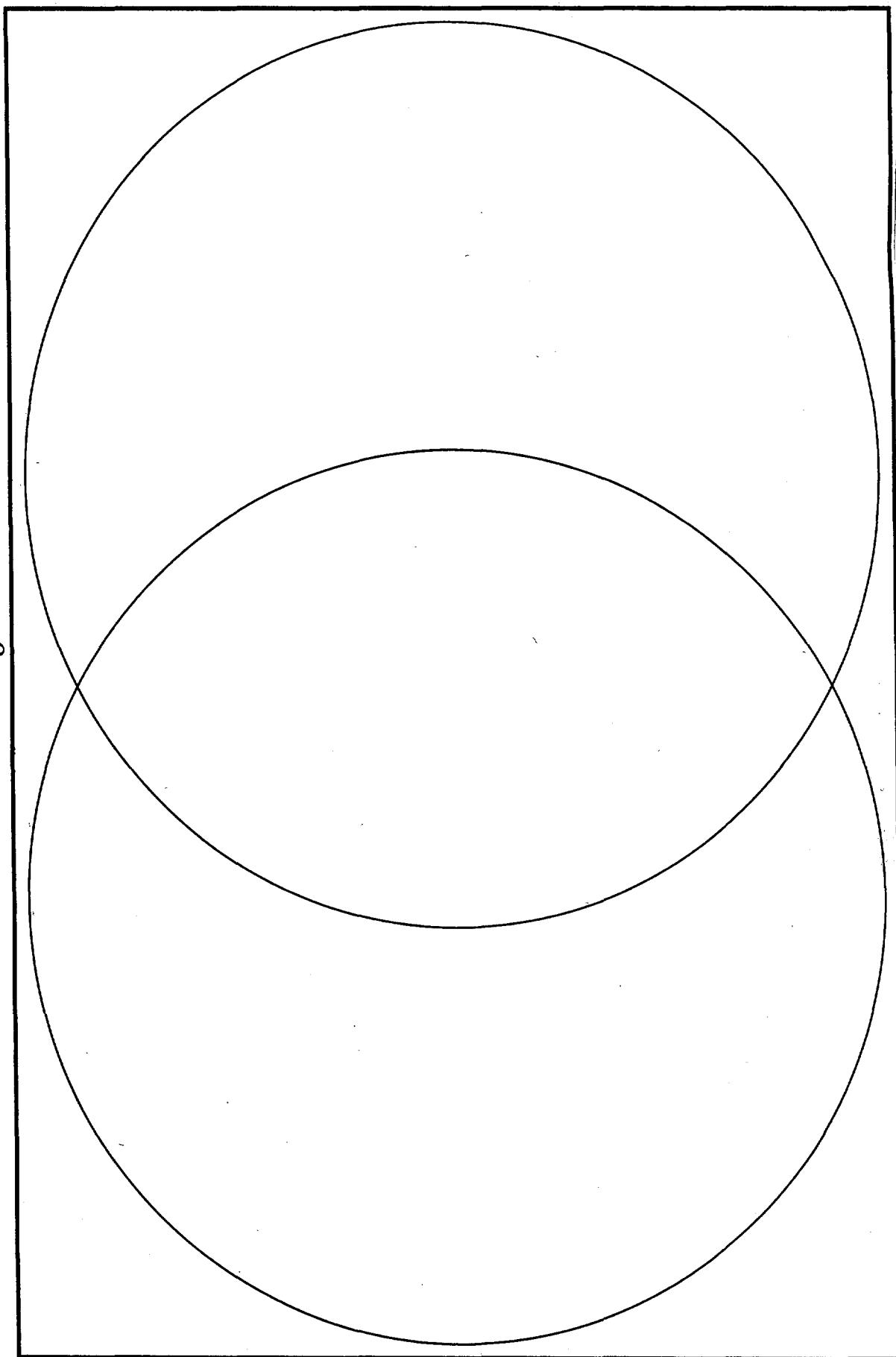
Also, write down any questions that you have while reading.

Final

Venn Diagram



Venn Diagram



Discussion Questions/Topics for pages 55-84

1. Why do you think the author mentioned the women who had five babies on page 57?
 2. How would you feel if you had poured the kerosene on your mother on accident?
 3. Why do you think the author wrote about Billie Jo's dream in such detail?
 4. What did you think of when Mrs. Brown's flower was mentioned? What do you think it was symbolizing?
 5. Share your personal responses and the sections that you want to share.
-

Name _____

Date _____

Self-reflection

If you feel like you are giving full participation in your literature group,
write an explanation for how you are doing this.

If you feel like you are not giving 100% participation, write what you can do
to be a better group member.

Autumn 1934

Autumn 1934

Pages: 87-95

- Allow fifteen minutes for literature circle discussions.
- Have students share their Venn diagrams amongst their group members.
- Students will also share their response journal entries and any questions they had while reading this section.
- After group discussion, have one student from each group share one interesting thought or question he/she had from their discussion.

Teacher tasks:

Walk around and take anecdotal notes of the students' participation, responses, etc.

Student tasks:

Read pages 99-124

Prompted Response: I noticed...

Spelling and Vocabulary Activity

The following words are on pages 99-124.

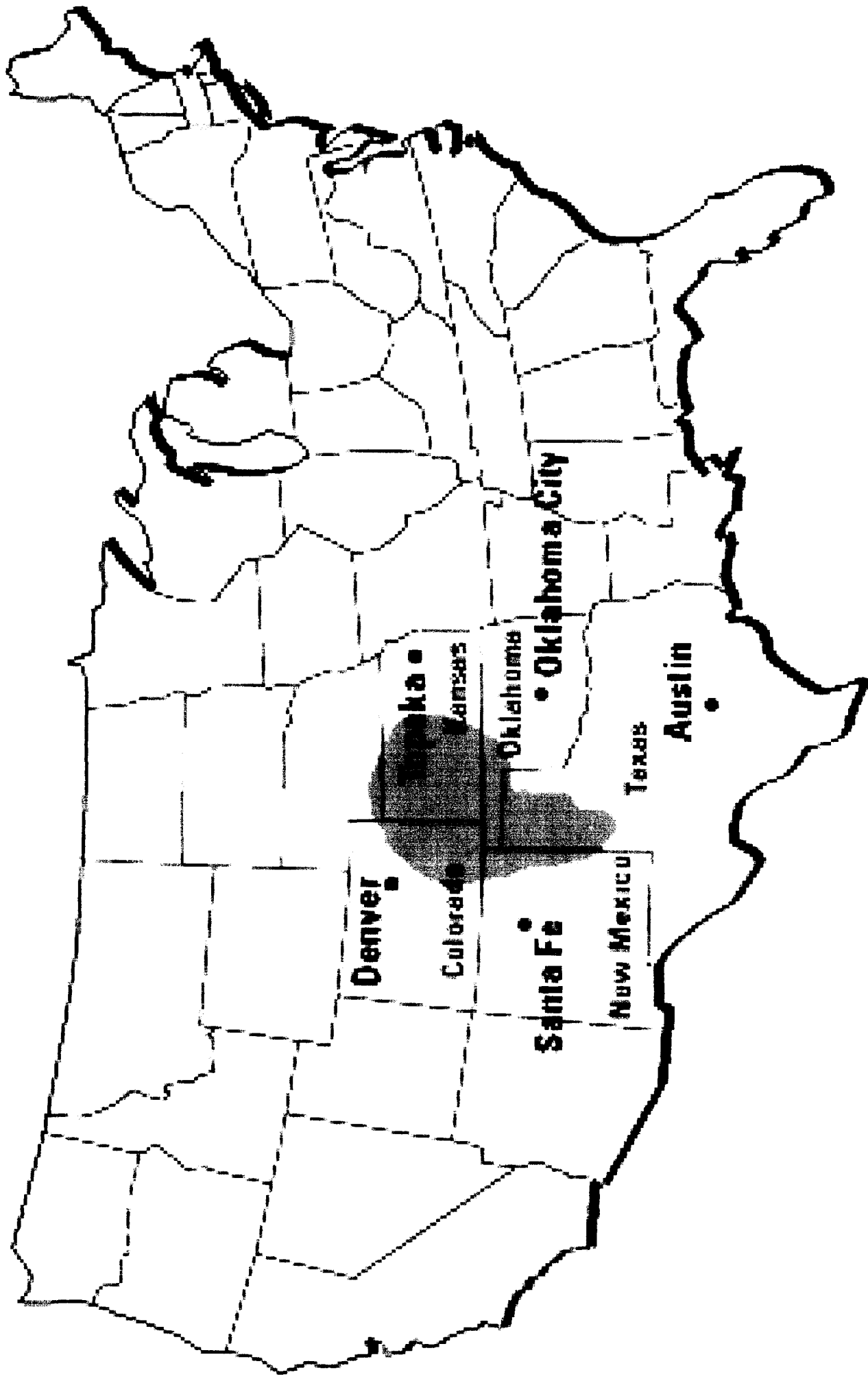
- 1. suffocated**
- 2. grime**
- 3. forsaken**
- 4. cloaked**
- 5. survey**
- 6. festered**
- 7. paralysis**
- 8. pasteboard**
- 9. migrants**
- 10. tumbleweeds**

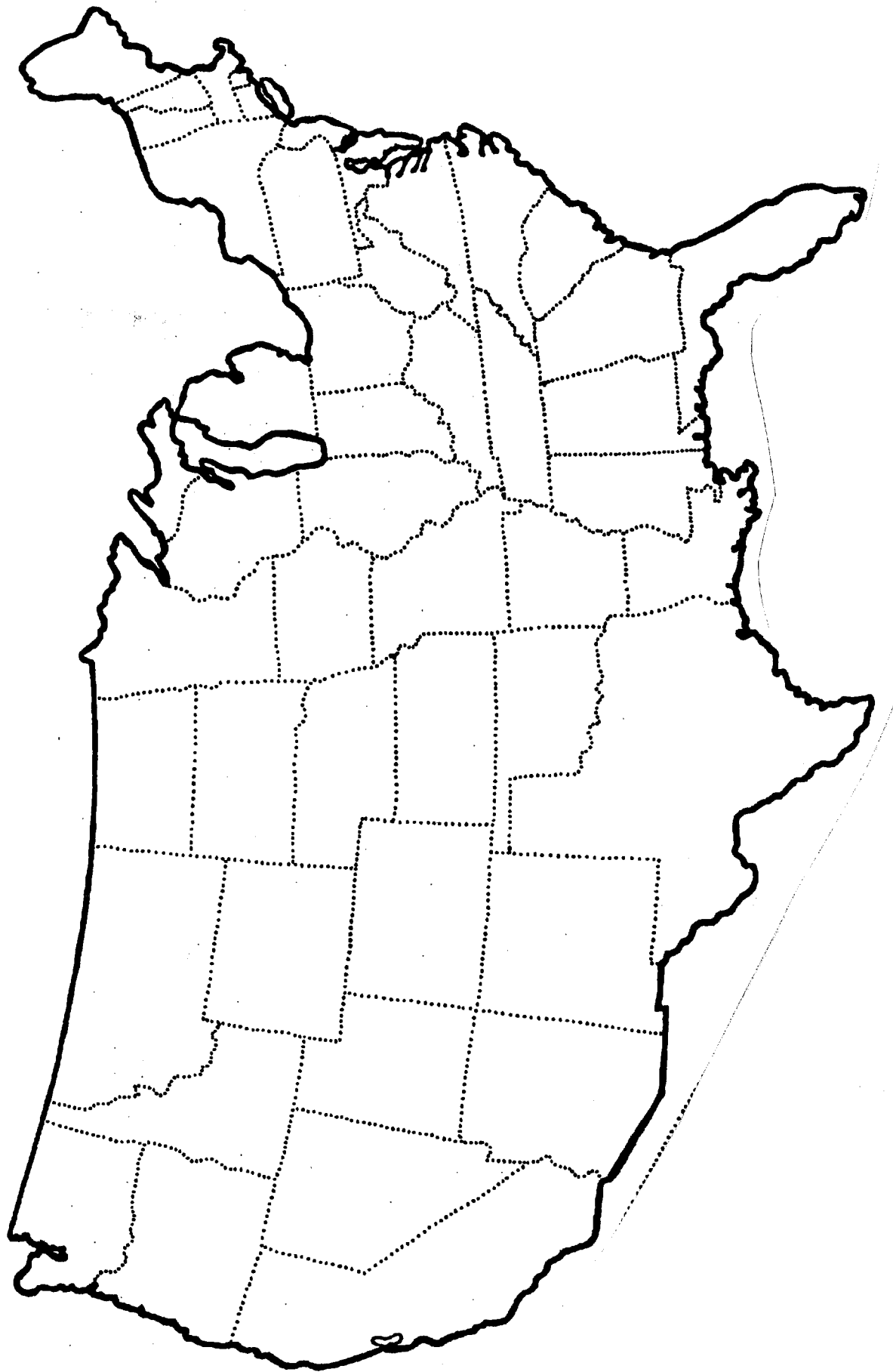
- Have students create crossword puzzles with the spelling and vocabulary words.
 - Then have the students switch their crossword puzzle with another classmate to fill out.
-

Social Studies Activity

- Hand out a copy of the U.S. map to each student.
 - Tell the students that when the drought and dust storms showed no signs of stopping, many people abandoned their land. Some people were forced to leave by bank foreclosures.
 - Show students the area of the U.S. that was affected by the dust bowl and have them color this section. *See Dustbowl Map
 - Have the students look at other U.S. maps to draw in the topography of the area affected by the dust bowl.
 - Also, have students draw in the topography of the states the dust bowlers had to travel through in order to reach California.
 - Have the students create map keys for their maps.
-

The Dust Bowl





Winter 1935

Winter 1935

Pages: 99-124

- Hand out the discussion sheets.
- Allow students fifteen to twenty minutes for discussion.
- After the groups meet, have a whole class discussion on what the students think is going to happen next in the story. Also, have students share about how the discussions are going and if anything needs to change in order to produce better discussions. Write down any suggestions or comments.
- Next, have students create a cluster web on the blank side of their journal with the word music in the middle. Have students create other circles that branch off that contain a word or words that pertain to music and the meaning it holds in this story. –Will be shared during next literature discussion.

Teacher tasks:

Listen and observe discussions

Remind students about creating a cluster web

Student tasks:

Read pages 125-149 for next discussion

Prompted Response: If I could change...

Discussion Questions/Topics for pages 99-124

1. Do you think you would shoot your animals rather than letting them starve? Why?
 2. Why do you think the author included the short passage about the family who stayed at the schoolhouse for a few days?
 3. Has your opinions about Billie Jo or her dad changed since the beginning of this book? Share why or why not?
 4. Share your journal responses with the group.
-



Social Studies Activity

- Tell students that they are going to be listening to music of the 1930's.

PLAY: "It Don't Mean a Thing (if it Ain't Got Swing)". By Duke Ellington.

- While the students are listening, have them sketch a picture of how the music makes them feel or suggest that they write a few words down that explains what they feel from listening to the music.
- Have the students share their responses, and then discuss if they think this kind of happy feeling music was typical of the 1930's.
- Next, tell the students that this song sums up the "in" music of the thirties. There were popular songs such as "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime" that spoke to the hardships of the time, but the young people flocked to hear and dance to the big bands of Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller and Tommy Dorsey.
- Play "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime"
- Discuss the meaning of this song as a whole class and how it made each student feel.

(Information from <http://www.nhmccd.edu/contracts/lrc/kc/decade30.html#music>)

Winter 1935

Pages: 125-149

- Hand out the discussion sheets.
- Remind students to also share their cluster webs with their groups.
- Allow students twenty minutes for discussion.
- Have a whole class sharing. Each group will share one part of the story with the class.
- After discussion, have the students fill out the self-evaluation checklist.

Teacher tasks:

Listen and observe discussions

Take anecdotal notes of the students' discussions.

Students tasks:

Read pages 153-189 for next discussion

Prompted Response: I think....

Discussion Questions/Topics for pages 125-149

1. Explain your reaction when you read about the young boy dieing in the dust storm?
 2. Why do you think the author is so descriptive about the dust and the dust storms?
 3. Do you think Billie Jo will continue to play the piano even though it hurts so badly? Why or Why not?
 4. How do you think you would react to such a hard life in the dust bowl? Why do you think Billie Jo does not complain about her situation to her dad or the other people in her life?
 5. Share your journal responses and any part of the story that you would like to read aloud to your group.
 6. Share your cluster webs.
 7. As a group, pick a passage from this section that was most meaningful or generated the most discussion. Share during whole class discussion.
-

Spring 1935

Spring 1935

Pages: 153-189

- Hand out the discussion sheets.
- Allow the students 20 minutes to discuss.
- After discussion, have the students write on a blank sheet of paper one interesting topic their group discussed.

Teacher tasks:

Walk around and take anecdotal notes of each student's participation.

Join at least two groups and share your own personal connections to the story.

Student tasks:

Read Pages 193-206

Prompted Response: I was surprised by...

On a blank piece of paper, students will write a paragraph about one interesting topic they discussed during literature groups.

Discussion Questions/Topics for pages 153-189

1. Share your journal responses with the group.
 2. Share a passage that you felt was really memorable.
 3. Name some instances that Billie Jo really noticed she did not have a mother? Explain how you might feel if you were her during those same instances.
 4. How did you feel when you read about the break from the dust followed by disaster?
 5. How do you think it might have felt to have people taking pictures of your home and farm?
 6. Predict what you think is going to happen next.
-

Vocabulary and Spelling Activity

Words found on pages 193-227

Page 197- kerchief

Page 197- smother

Page 200- gaunt

Page 202- tumbleweed

Page 202- reserves

Page 222- sassy

Page 226- betrothal

Page 226-diversification

Page 227- comical

- Assign each student one of the vocabulary words
 - He/she will look up the word in the dictionary and write all of the definitions listed for that particular word.
 - Next, the student will look the word up in the story and copy the sentence that contains the word.
 - Finally, the student will write at least two sentences describing the meaning of his/her word in the context of the story. *See examples
-

Comical - 1. producing laughter, amusing, funny

She wears a comical hat, 2 flowers
in December, and when she smiles,
her face is full enough of springtime,
it makes her hat seem just right.

The sentence above does
not mean she wore a hat and
laughed. It means she wore a
funny, or amusing to the eye hat.

Sassy

Saucy, Impertinent, Cheeky, and a West African tree having a bark that yields a poisonous alkabid.

We are both confident, and a little sassy.

What Billie Jo means is, she may be confident but cocky also. Not a good combination at all.



Social Studies Activity

- Play the “Star Spangled Banner” for the students and tell them that it was in 1931 that Congress designated this song as the national anthem. Then play “God Bless America”. Let the students know that in 1938 Kate Smith sang Irving Berlin’s “God Bless America” and made the song her own. There have been many proponents of making this the national anthem, replacing the hard to sing “Star Spangled Banner”.
- Place students into groups of three to four. Have each group complete a compare and contrast chart over the “Star Spangled Banner” and “God Bless America”. Then have each group decide which song they would want for the national anthem.
- Share the charts with the class.
- (Information from <http://www.nhmccd.edu/contracts/lrc/kc/decade30.html#music>)

More Music Links:

- [American Popular Music 1900-1950](#) A look at the music and the times.
 - [Lyrics Database](#) 61,000 song lyrics. Search by keyword.
 - [Music in the Public Domain](#) Includes song lists – with links to some lyrics.
-

Compare and Contrast the Star Spangled Banner vs. God Bless America

Star Spangled Banner	God Bless America

Which would you prefer as a national anthem _____

Summer 1935

Summer 1935

Pages: 193-206

- Allow the students 15 minutes for discussion.
- Let them know that today is open discussion.
- First, the students need to share their journal responses.
- After this is done, the students may choose what to discuss.
- After discussion, the group needs to write a group letter to the teacher explaining what they discussed. Have one student write the letter and the rest of the students should give their input. (This can be used for assessment purposes)
- For example, the letter could read:

Dear Miss Walker,

During our discussion, we discussed how surprised we were that Billie Jo left her father. Some of us thought it was uncaring of her, but most of us thought that it was what she needed to do to show her father how bad she was hurting. After this, we shared about how she and her father reunited. We were all glad that her father wanted to change and really be a dad to her. We were also glad that he said he would go to the doctor to get his mole checked out.

Teacher tasks:

Students may need a little prodding to get their discussions going.

Walk around and take anecdotal notes of student participation.

Student tasks:

Read pages 209-227

Prompted Response: I am excited or sad about...

Social Studies Activity

- Share the following information with the students.

Radio reached its zenith of popularity in this decade. By 1939, about 80 percent of the population owned radio sets. Americans loved to laugh at the antics of such comedians as Jack Benny, Fred Allen, George Burns and Gracie Allen, Amos and Andy, and Fibber McGee and Molly. The heroics of the Lone Ranger, the Green Hornet, the Shadow, and Jack Armstrong, all-American boy, thrilled listeners both young and old and sold countless boxes of cereal. News broadcasts by commentators like H. V. Kaltenborn and Edward R. Murrow kept the public aware of the increasing crisis in Europe. Franklin Roosevelt used the medium in his "Fireside Chats" to influence public opinion. One of the most dramatic moments in radio history occurred on May 6, 1937, when the German airship Hindenburg burst into flames as it was about to land in Lakehurst, New Jersey. The reporter Herb Morrison conveyed the horror of the incident live. His reaction to what was happening in front of him still entralls today.

- Next, tell the students that one of the famous radio series was Jack Armstrong, all-American boy. Tell the students that they are going to broadcast the script.
 - There are eight parts. Divide the students into eight groups and give each group a part.
 - After the students are done, have a whole class discussion about what they did and did not like about this script.
-

VOICE1: Jack Armstrong!

VOICE2: Jack Armstrong!

VOICE3: Jack Armstrong!

ANNCR: Jack Armstrong! The All-American Boy!

QUARTET: Wave the flag for Hudson high, boys Show them how we stand Ever shall our team be champions Known throughout the land (keep humming)

ANNCR: Wheaties, Breakfast of Champions, bring you the thrilling adventures of Jack Armstrong, The All-American Boy! Listen fellows and girls! You know what I'd like to do right now? Well, I'll tell you. I'd like to ring bells and blow whistles ...

SOUND: A series of bells and whistles drown him out

ANNCR: Thanks, Mr. Sound Effects Man. Yes, today is really good news day. Here's the story: In the first place, Jack Armstrong starts on a brand new radio adventure. One of the most exciting and dangerous he's ever had! I know you won't want to miss a single episode of this thrilling Jack Armstrong adventure. In the second place, we're welcoming back a lot of Jack Armstrong's old friends. We're mighty glad to have you back with us. And there's a very special welcome for the fellows and girls who are hearing this program for the very first time today. We hope that you'll get a lot of thrills and real pleasure out of Jack Armstrong's newest adventure, and that you'll make the acquaintance of those extra good Wheaties flakes right away. You know, right now, at the very beginning of a new school year, and at the start of a brand new Jack Armstrong series, is a mighty fine time to start making Wheaties your regular year round breakfast dish. So, would you do this for me? Would you eat a Breakfast of Champions the next four mornings in a row. Then ask yourself if you've ever found any other breakfast dish that gives you as much real pleasure and satisfaction as this combination of Wheaties, milk, and fruit. Chances are you'll want to climb right on the Wheaties bandwagon with the rest of Jack Armstrong's friends. And it's my bet that you'll say Wheaties have a flavor that's absolutely different and better than any other breakfast dish you've ever tasted.

And now, Jack Armstrong--The All-American Boy!

ANNCR: After their thrilling experiences on Easter Island, Jack, Betty, and Billy have returned to Hudson to continue their studies. Uncle Jim is back in Hudson, too, and is engaged in experiments developing a new type of power so that his airplanes can fly tremendous distances without stopping to refuel. Right now, Jack is busy, too. In his workshop at home, he is hurriedly putting the finishing touches on his new short wave receiver.

SOUND: Car driving begins and continues...

ANNCR: So Billy and Betty are driving out alone to Uncle Jim's office at the airplane factory with an important looking letter that they've just picked up at the post office. Listen:

BILLY: Say, Betty, this looks like an important letter for Uncle Jim. Sure hope he's at the airplane factory.

BETTY: Well, it ought to be important, Billy with all those stamps on it!

BILLY: I'll say! Came all the way from the Philippines in a clipper ship! Gosh, wouldn't I like to make that trip!

BETTY: Well, I hope that doesn't mean that Uncle Jim will have to go to the Philippines.

BILLY: I hope it does, Betty. Then maybe we can go with him.

BETTY: There's the factory. But Billy! The shades to Uncle Jim's office are pulled down!

BILLY: Say, that's too bad. If he isn't in, we're gonna have to find out where he is and take this letter to him.

BETTY: Oh, I thinks he's in. I just saw someone pull the shade aside and look out for a moment.

BILLY: That's funny, Uncle Jim never has his shades down when he's in. Well, here we are.

SOUND: Car engine stops.

BILLY: Get out, Betty, and we'll see whose in Uncle Jim's office.

SOUND: Car doors close, footsteps.

Betty: Uncle Jim ought to be here this time of day.

SOUND: Door to office opens.

BILLY: Oh, I don't know, Betty. He's been spending a lot of time experimenting with atomic power in that laboratory that's built in the middle of Knob's Hill.

BETTY: His door's closed, we'd better knock.

SOUND: Knock on door.

BILLY: Aw, I guess he's not in.

SOUND: Billy tries knob and it's unlocked. He opens the door as they speak.

BILLY: Now wait a minute, this door's not locked! Let's look inside.

SOUND: Entering room, footsteps.

BILLY: Nope, not here. Gosh!!! What's been going on in here!

BETTY: Why--Why, Billy! Look! Everything is topsy-turvy!

BILLY: I'll say it is! Look at Uncle Jim's desk! All the drawers pulled out, paper is scattered everywhere,--why even the telephone is knocked over!

BETTY: And look at those filing cabinets! Billy, somebody's been in them, too!

BILLY: Say, it looks as though a cyclone had swept through the office!

BETTY: I bet the cyclone had two legs, Billy! Remember, somebody was looking outside through that shade when we came we came in the garage!

SOUND: A couple of footsteps.

BILLY: Where could he have gone to? I betcha he slipped out through the next room. The door is open. Come on!

SOUND: Footsteps.

BETTY: There's no one in here, now. Nothing but Uncle Jim's short wave radio set!

BILLY: No, of course he isn't in here now! If he was a burglar or a prowler or someone who had no business here, he naturally would beat it the minute he saw somebody coming! And I betcha he got out this way! He coulda come in here as soon as he saw us and then gone into the hallway through that door, and made his escape through the back of the building!

BETTY: Billy, hadn't we better telephone Uncle Jim at the Laboratory right away?

BILLY: You bet we had! We'll use Uncle Jim's private wire, too!

SOUND: Phone being picked up.

BILLY: Hello?-----hello!

SOUND: Punching the cradle on the phone.

BILLY: HELLO!!!

SOUND: Punching cradle again.

BILLY: HELLO!!!!

SOUND: Punching cradle again.

BETTY: Oh-what's the matter?

BILLY: That's funny! The telephone's as dead as a doornail! Gosh! I betcha the wires are cut!

BETTY: Wait a second, I'll look.....They're not cut here, Billy.

BILLY: Say, that's bad! That means that they've been cut from the outside, Betty! Every phone in the building will be dead!

BETTY: But we can run over to the laboratory in the car! Come on, let's hurry!

BILLY: No, wait, I've got a better idea! Jack ought to be in on this! I betcha we can get him on Uncle Jim's short-wave transmitter. Jack told me he was gonna work on his receiver this afternoon.